



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE ARRESTS 582 VIOLENT GANG MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES IN A TWO-WEEK NATIONWIDE ENFORCEMENT OPERATION

*14 arrested in the San Antonio Metropolitan Area under ICE's ongoing
"Community Shield" anti-gang initiative*

SAN ANTONIO, TX – A 30-year-old citizen of Mexico charged with assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated assault and deadly conduct discharging a firearm is among the 14 arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under the auspices of "Operation Community Shield," ICE's on-going national anti-gang initiative.

Michael Chertoff, Homeland Security Secretary and Marcy Forman, Director of Investigations for ICE today announced the arrest of 582 street gang members and associates during a two-week, nationwide enforcement action.

From July 16 thru 28, ICE offices throughout the United States teamed up with federal, state and local law enforcement partners to target members of more than 54 violent street gangs, including Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Sureños, 18th Street Gang, Latin Kings, Vatos Locos, Mexican Mafia, La Raza gang, Border Brothers, Brown Pride, Norteno, Florencia 13, Tiny Rascal, Asian Boyz, Jamaican Posse, and numerous other violent street gangs.

The 582 gang members and associates, including 11 gang leaders, are accused of various criminal violations and/or administrative immigration violations. In total, 76 of these individuals have been charged with criminal violations that range from illegally re-entering the United States after deportation; to being alien in possession of a firearm; to possession of fraudulent documents or various state crimes.

"Street gangs in America have grown and expanded their influence to an alarming level, marked by increased violence and criminal activity," said Secretary Chertoff. "These gangs pose a severe threat to public safety and this growth must not go unchallenged."

"The arrests of these violent gang members illustrates ICE's commitment to aggressively go after these individuals before they commit further egregious crimes," said Alonzo Pena, special agent-in-charge of ICE Investigations in San Antonio. "ICE will continue to partner up with our law enforcement partners to disrupt and dismantle this criminal element."

The vast majority of the gang members and associates, 506, were arrested on administrative immigration charges, ranging from being a convicted felon foreign national subject to removal; to entering the country without inspection; to violating the terms of a visa. Of these individuals, 261 are foreign nationals who have prior criminal convictions, rendering them subject to removal from the United States.

This initiative harnessed the work of 40 ICE offices and more than 84 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. This operation employed 384 ICE agents and officers, 247 state and local officers and 92 agents from the DEA, ATF and FBI.

Some of the gang members arrested in this operation include:

- On July 18 in San Antonio, ICE agents assisted by San Antonio Police Department and Alcohol-Tobacco-Firearms and Explosives arrested a member of the Mexican Mafia. A 30-year-old Mexican national who members claim is a high- ranking enforcer. This individual has a long- standing criminal history ranging from aggravated assault to weapons trafficking.
- On July 21, ICE agents along with our local law enforcement partners arrested a member of the 18th Street gang on his front yard. This 36-year-old Mexican national is a five- time prior deport has a lengthy criminal history that dates back to 1989. Local police have arrested and charged this individual with hit and run, drug trafficking and burglary.

This nationwide initiative is intended to disrupt, dismantle, and assist in the criminal prosecution of violent gangs by employing the full range of authorities available to ICE.

ICE uses its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting gang-related narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of illegally derived assets.

Operation Community Shield involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or deport individual gang members.

Operation Community Shield also has an important foreign component, coordinating efforts through ICE's Attaché offices abroad, particularly with those governments that are also experiencing gang problems. To date, ICE has participated in several anti-gang law enforcement summits and conferences throughout Central America to better coordinate anti-gang related efforts.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield was MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. In February, ICE kicked off the initiative with agents in six major U.S. cities conducting a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of 103 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents throughout the country joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions.

In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of this second phase, ICE's Operation Community Shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation's communities.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities